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AUTHOR Germeroth, Darla
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ABSTRACT

A study examined areas of the doctoral dissertation process that are often problematic for the Ph.D./Ed.D. candidate in the field of communication. Subjects, 250 randomly selected Speech Communication Association members holding a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. were surveyed. Of the 250 surveys mailed, 137 were returned, representing a 54.8% return rate. Results indicated that: (1) subjects most frequently cited the pressures and demands of employment as the greatest barrier to dissertation completion; (2) subjects conducting quantitative research struggled more with data collection and interpretation, had more difficulty in choosing a topic, and saw their advisors as more supportive than those who conducted qualitative research; and (3) women were significantly more likely to let their perfectionism stand in the way of dissertation completion and experienced more difficulty in narrowing a topic than men. Findings suggest a chronological discussion of dissertation survival techniques: read dissertation guide books before classes start; talk to recent graduates of the doctoral program; purchase a computer and printer; enroll in courses to help focus the dissertation idea; explore research ideas in term papers; write a thorough proposal; choose a dissertation director and committee members carefully; keep track of progress on the dissertation by keeping a log; if depression sets in, obtain professional counseling or join a dissertation support group; avoid delays caused by perfectionism; and quickly publish at least one or two articles from the dissertation. (Twenty-five tables of data are included; 41 references and the survey instrument are attached.) (RS)

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Lonely Days and Lonely Nights:

Completing the Doctoral Dissertation

by

Darla Germeroth, Ph.D.
Dept. of Communication
University of Scranton
Scranton, PA 18510-4192

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> I never had any doubts about course work. I knew I could do that well. And now I've passed comps and have to write a dissertation. This is the first time I've had any serious doubts about whether I was really capable of finishing [the doctorate]."
>
> Excerpt from an interview with a doctoral candidate. Stryker, Twohey, & Halderson (1985, p. 16)

As the consummate educational experience, the doctoral dissertation is designed to "enhance scholarship in the sense of looking for truth, to build on the existing body of knowledge, and to create original works" (Mauch & Birch, 1989, p. 17). Unfortunately, many doctoral students never attain these noble and valid goals because they are unable to finish their dissertations. Sternberg (1981) estimates that 60% of the 51,000 ABDs generated every year in the social sciences, education, and humanities remain ABD (All But the Dissertation).[1] His more 'optimistic' estimate is that no more than half of ABDs will get their degrees (p. 10). Translated into numbers of significant proportion, there were approximately a half-million persons who became ABD between 1980 and 1989. Of these, one-quarter of a million will remain ABD (p. 26).

Sternberg's dismal statistics are corroborated by a recent report from the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington, D.C. Although the Council of Graduate Schools does not limit its statistical count to ABDs, it reports that nearly half of the students admitted to PhD programs each year in the United States never complete degree requirements (Metzger, 1989, p. 2). As American higher education enters the 1990s, there is no indication that the trend of incomplete doctorates will change.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, ABDs are an at-risk student population. Jacks, Chubin, Porter, and Connolly (1983) consider ABDs "casualties of the

graduate system" (p. 74). Sternberg (1981) sees the ABD phenomenon as "a large 'social problem,' perhaps even a crisis, in the midst of American graduate education" (p. 26). Yet, the graduate school experience is unique for every individual. As Vartuli (1982) writes: "The graduate student's attitudes, amount of support, learning styles, self-concept, values, experiences, age, and sex all contribute to different feelings, expectations, and experiences" (p. 1). However, Vartuli also points out that "Everyone pursuing the doctoral degree has to jump certain hurdles" (p. 1) Jumping those "hurdles" is the subject of this paper and the focus of the panel of which this paper is a part.

Based on the experiences and advice of individuals in Communication who have already earned their PhDs or EdDs, this paper is designed to help students through the lonely days and lonely nights of completing a doctoral dissertation. Additionally, this paper is written for graduate faculty and graduate program directors who are in positions to make "it clear to the candidates that the dissertation is a rehearsal for more, not a culmination of a career" (Phillips, 1988, CRTNET #126)). More specifically, the present paper attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Based on the experiences of PhDs and EdDs in Communication, what are the greatest barriers to completing a dissertation?
   a. Do these barriers differ depending upon how many years an individual takes to complete a doctoral program?
   b. Do these barriers differ depending upon how many years the doctoral candidate remains ABD?
   c. Do these barriers differ depending upon the type of research conducted? (qualitative versus quantitative)
   d. Do these barriers differ depending upon gender of the doctoral candidate?

2. How useful are various forms of emotional support to a doctoral candidate when completing a dissertation?
   a. Are certain forms of support perceived as more useful by quantitative researchers than by qualitative researchers?
   b. Are certain forms of support perceived as more useful by men than by women?

3. Based on their own experiences during the dissertation process, what advice do Communication PhDs and EdDs have to help present and future ABDs succeed in completing a doctoral dissertation?

Readers who are entering doctoral programs or who are presently ABD will probably find the "Recommendations for Future and Present Doctoral Candidates" section most beneficial. Based on answers obtained from the present study's research questions, it provides a chronological discussion of techniques to survive a doctoral dissertation.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Development of the Survey Instrument

In order to identify areas of the dissertation process that are often problematic for the PhD/EdD candidate in Communication and to solicit advice from completed PhDs and EdDs on how to avoid those problems, a mail survey was developed by this author. A copy of the survey appears in Appendix A.

The survey instrument was based on information from two arenas of knowledge. The first arena included published books and articles about doctoral students and dissertations. The most instrumental literature sources were Davis and Parker (1979), Jacks, Chubin, Porter and Connolly (1983), Martin (1980), Mauch and Birch (1989), Simpson (1986), and Sternberg (1981).

The second arena of information used to construct the survey was informal interviews. Feedback from these individuals was used to focus the survey on Communication dissertations and to make sure key areas of the dissertation process were not overlooked on the survey instrument. Five persons were interviewed: three had completed their dissertations within the past year, and two were working on their dissertations. Of

these two, one had recently set a defense date, and the other was writing the dissertation proposal.

In light of the research questions, the literature review and informal interviews were used to construct a mail survey that would (1) identify predominant barriers Communication PhDs and EdDs encountered while completing their dissertations, (2) quantify the severity of the barriers encountered, (3) quantify the usefulness of various forms of emotional support; and (4) gather advice for completing a dissertation.

Sampling Plan

A list of Speech Communication Association (SCA) members holding PhDs or EdDs was requested from the national office but unfortunately, such a list does not exist. However, the Speech Communication Association Directory lists the types of degrees earned (e.g., BA, BS, MA, etc.) by each member so the 1990 directory was used to draw a sample of PhDs and EdDs in Communication.

Rather than employing the time consuming and undoubtedly inaccurate method of numbering all PhDs and EdDs in the SCA directory in order to gain a random sample, a multi-step sampling plan was devised. First, the columns in the directory were numbered. Then, using a random number chart, columns were selected from which the sample would be drawn. A column could be chosen more than once, if the column number repeated on the random numbers chart. After a column had been randomly selected, the number of PhDs and EdDs in that column was counted, and a random number chart was used to determine which one of the PhDs or EdDs in the column would be included in the sample. This selection process continued until the sample size of 250 was reached.

Of the 250 surveys mailed, 137 were returned representing a 54.8% return. One of these surveys was not included in the final analysis because the individual had been incorrectly identified in the SCA directory as having earned a doctorate, and four were not included because they were received after the statistical analysis had been completed. Therefore, information from 132 surveys was the basis for analysis.

Measure of Survey Reliability

Using the same multi-step sampling plan described to select the 250 survey recipients, 25 additional SCA members were chosen for a test-retest group to measure the survey's reliability. Two criteria had to be met: First, the integrity of the research design required that members of the test-retest group not know upon receiving the first copy of the survey (the "test") that they would eventually receive a second copy of the survey (the "retest"). Second, it was critical that subject anonymity be protected. With the dual goal of maintaining research design integrity and subject anonymity, the following method was employed.

After being selected from the SCA directory to be part of the test-retest group, each of the 25 subjects had two envelopes prepared for him or her. One envelope contained the first copy of the survey (the "test") and the same cover letter received by the sample of 250 subjects. The other envelope contained the second copy of the survey (the "retest") and a different cover letter explaining that the subject was part of the test-retest group.

The survey mailed to the test-retest group differed in one way from the survey mailed to subjects in the research sample. Unlike the survey mailed to the sample of 250, the survey mailed to the test-retest group asked subjects to provide a code number consisting of the last four digits

of their Social Security number so the test could be matched with the retest. This method kept subject identity from the researcher because only the subject knew his or her code number. Regarding the remote possibility of someone identifying the subjects by Social Security, there are multiple combinations for the missing first five digits, and therefore, the likelihood of someone determining whose survey was whose was minimal.

The envelope containing the retest was mailed two weeks after the test had been mailed. Although this did not ensure that all test-retest members would complete the test and retest in the same interval of time, it did ensure anonymity of the persons because once the names and addresses were typed on the envelopes and the envelopes were mailed, there was no record of who served in the test-retest group, thereby, further protecting subject anonymity.

Of the 25 subjects in the test-retest group, four returned only the test and three returned only the retest. Without the matching pair, these surveys were of no use to the test-retest procedure, and to avoid violating any principles of sampling, unmatched tests and retests were not added to the larger sample for data analysis. Ten subjects returned both the test and retest providing a 40% return rate.

Using version 4.0 of SPSS-X to compute Cronbach's alpha, a reliability coefficient was computed for each major quantitative section of the survey instrument. Reliability of the demographic data was .9537 (Questions 1-7); for usefulness of emotional support forms it was .8672 (Question 8); for financial support it was .7430 (Question 9); for miscellaneous data it was .7713 (Questions 10-16); for severity of barriers it was .9121 (Question 17); and for the ranking of greatest barriers it was .6886 (Question 18).

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Description of the Survey Respondents

Of the 132 respondents, 124 (93.93%) had earned PhDs and eight (6.06%) had earned EdDs. Fifty-five respondents were female (41.67%), and 77 were male (58.33%). Fifty-nine survey participants had completed quantitative dissertations (44.70%); 63 had completed qualitative dissertations (47.74%); and nine had completed a combination of qualitative/quantitative dissertation research (6.82%). One respondent did not answer the survey question related to type of dissertation.

Three of the 132 survey participants completed their doctorates in the 1940s; three in the 1950s; 16 in the 1960s; 44 in the 1970s; 63 in the 1980s; and one in 1990. Two respondents did not answer the survey question related to year of doctorate completion (Table 1).

The average number of years to complete all requirements for the doctorate was 4.867 years (range = 2 to 12 years; mode = 3.00 years). (See Table 2.) The average number of years from becoming ABD to earning the PhD or EdD was 2.174 years (range = 0 to 9 years; mode = 1.00 years). (See Table 3.) Nearly 8% of the respondents became ABD and earned the degree within the same calendar year (7.6%; n=10) .

Examining survey participants by type of dissertation research conducted and the amount of time they were ABD indicated that 33 qualitative researchers were ABD for two or more years while 23 quantitative researchers were ABD for two or more years. Twenty-five qualitative researchers were ABD for one year or less while 31 quantitative researchers were ABD for one year or less.

For 36.4% (n=48) of the respondents, the primary source of income while completing the doctoral dissertation was a graduate teaching

assistantship. For 35.6% (n=47) of the respondents, the primary source of income while working on the dissertation was a teaching position other than an assistantship; 8.3% (n=11) of the respondents relied on a spouse's income while working on the dissertation; 6.1% (n=8) used money from savings or an inheritance to pay the bills while completing the dissertation; 5.3% (n=7) relied on employment other than teaching; another 3.0% (n=4) had the GI bill as financial support while doing the dissertation; 1.5% (n=2) were supported by grant money; .8% (n=1) took out loans while doing the dissertation; and responses from 3% (n=4) of the participants were uncodeable. (See Table 4.)

Of the 77 male respondents, 46 had published before completing their dissertations while only 18 of the 55 female respondents had published before completing their dissertations. A correlation employing Pearson's r indicated that male survey participants were significantly more likely to have published before completing their dissertations than female survey participants ($p \leq .01$).

After summarizing basic demographic information on the 132 surveys, responses were further analyzed in the following areas: (1) greatest barriers to dissertation completion; (2) severity of the barriers encountered; (3) usefulness of various forms of emotional support; and (4) advice for completing the dissertation.

Greatest Barriers to Dissertation Completion

On the survey, participants were asked to identify the three greatest barriers to completing their dissertations from a list of 25 potential barriers (Question #18 on the survey). Information regarding the greatest barriers was analyzed in four ways: first, an overview of the barriers most frequently cited as major barriers; second, the single greatest

barrier based on the total number of years the respondent used to complete the doctorate; third, the single greatest barrier based on the number of years the respondent was ABD; and fourth, the single greatest barrier for survey participants based on the type of dissertation completed (i.e., quantitative or qualitative).

Overview of Most Frequently Cited Barriers: Looking at all survey participants, the barrier cited most frequently as the greatest barrier was "job related pressures and demands." (See Tables 5 to 7.) Nearly 14% of the respondents ranked "job related pressure and demands" as the greatest barrier (13.6%; n=18); 9.1% (n=12) ranked it the second greatest barrier; and 4.5% (n=6) ranked it the third greatest barrier. This provided a cumulative percent of 27.2% (n=32).

The second most frequently cited barrier for survey participants was "setting aside time to work on the dissertation." 5.3% (n=7) ranked this as their greatest barrier; 11.4% (n=15) ranked it as their second greatest barrier; and 9.8% (n=13) ranked it as their third greatest barrier meaning 26.6% (n=35) of the respondents placed it in their top three barriers.

The third most frequently cited barrier was "one's own perfectionism." 9.8% (n=13) considered this their greatest barrier; 6.1% (n=8) ranked it as their second greatest barrier; and 3.8% (n=5) ranked it as their third greatest barrier meaning 19.7% (n=26) of the respondents placed their own perfectionism in the top three barriers to dissertation completion.

Division of the sample into subgroups indicated that certain barriers were more likely to be encountered under certain conditions.

Greatest Barrier Based on Total Years in Doctoral Program: When survey participants were divided along the median number of years needed to earn their doctorates, different barriers were perceived as the greatest

barrier. Of the 128 survey participants who indicated a "number one barrier," 73 participants (57%) took four years or less to complete all requirements for the doctorate and 55 (43%) required five years or more to complete their doctorates (Table 8). The greatest barrier for persons completing doctorates in four years or less was data collection (12.3%; n=9). The greatest barrier for persons completing their doctorates in five years or more was job related pressures and demands (18.2%; n=10). (See Table 9.)

Greatest Barrier Based on Number Years as an ABD: Dividing the sample along the median number years as an ABD, 50.4% (n=61) were ABD for one year or less and 49.6% (n=60) were ABD for two years or more. For individuals who were ABD for one year or less, there was little consensus on identifying the greatest barrier although the mechanics of having the dissertation typed or word processed received the most 'votes' for greatest barrier (11.5%; n=7). Data collection and setting aside time each received five 'votes' for greatest barrier by individuals who were ABD for one year or less (8.2% each). (See Table 10.)

There was more consensus regarding the greatest barrier for persons who were ABD for two years or more (n=60). The most frequently cited barrier by individuals who were ABD for two years or more was job related pressures and demands (18.3%; n=11). An additional 15% (n=9) of the respondents saw their own perfectionism as the greatest barrier to completion. (See Table 11.)

Greatest Barrier Based on Type of Dissertation: Upon dividing the sample by type of dissertation research (i.e., qualitative versus quantitative research), the most frequently cited barrier for the 63 persons who conducted qualitative research was job related pressures and

demands (22.2%; n=14). The barrier that received the next most 'votes' for greatest barrier by qualitative researchers was their own perfectionism (9.5%; n=6). (See Table 12.)

Regarding quantitative researchers and their barriers to dissertation completion, the 59 persons who conducted quantitative research did not have a single greatest barrier when considered as a group. Seven persons (11.9%) listed data collection as the greatest barrier; six persons (10.2%) listed their own perfectionism as the greatest barrier; and five persons (8.5%) listed choosing a topic as the greatest barrier. (See Table 13.)

Division of the sample by dissertation type and number of years as an ABD showed that qualitative researchers who were ABD one year or less (n= 25), showed no single barrier as being the greatest barrier (See Table 14). Qualitative researchers who were ABD for two years or more (n=33) struggled most with the barrier of job related pressures and demands (24.2%; n=8). (See Table 15.)

As for quantitative researchers, there was not a clear cut greatest barrier to completion. Those who were ABD for one year or less most frequently cited data collection (12.9%; n=4) and typing/word processing (12.9%; n=4) as the greatest barriers to completion (Table 16). Quantitative researchers who were ABD for two years or more (n=23) struggled most with financial pressures although this was not a clear cut greatest barrier (17.4%; n=4). (See Table 17.)

Division of the sample by type of dissertation and total years in the doctoral program showed that qualitative researchers requiring four years or less to complete the doctorate (n=32) experienced job related pressures and demands as their greatest barrier (18.8%; n=6). (See Table 18.) Qualitative researchers requiring five or more years to complete their

doctorates (n=27) also experienced job related pressures and demands as the greatest barrier (25.9%; n=7). (See Table 19.)

Quantitative researchers requiring four years or less to complete their doctorates (n=35) most frequently cited data collection as their greatest barrier (17.1%; n=6). (See Table 20.) Quantitative researchers requiring five years or more to complete their doctorates (n=24) did not have a single-most greatest barrier (Table 21). Choosing a topic and financial problems were equally identified as the greatest barrier to completion (16.7% each; n=4 each).

Severity of Barriers

Using four-point scales where a rating of "one" denoted a "minor barrier" and "four" denoted a "major barrier," survey participants rated 25 barriers to dissertation completion. If a barrier did not apply, respondents were to mark "NA" for "not applicable." (Question #17 on the survey.)

Realizing that the dissertation process differs to some degree depending upon the type of research conducted (e.g., quantitative researchers are more likely to struggle with data collection than qualitative researchers), the sample was divided based on type of dissertation research. This allowed for an analysis of barriers most likely to affect one type of research over the other.

Ratings of the 25 barriers were not expected to be normally distributed (e.g., not everyone would experience the barrier of having a dissertation director leave). Superimposing normal distributions on a histograms confirmed that severity of the barriers was not normally distributed and so the Mann-Whitney (Wilcoxan test) was used to analyze group differences. The Mann-Whitney test, unlike the t-test, "does not

require assumptions about the shape of the underlying distributions" (Norusis, 1990, p. 217).

Severity of Barriers Based on Type of Dissertation: As logic would dictate, there was a significant difference on the barrier of data collection (Z=2.8830; p=.0039). Persons who conducted quantitative research had more difficulty collecting data than persons who conducted qualitative research (Quantitative: n=58; mean rank=67.14; Qualitative: n=58; mean rank=49.86).

Along the same line of logic, data interpretation was significantly more of a problem for quantitative researchers than for qualitative researchers (Z=1.6872; p=.0916). While qualitative researchers had a mean rank of 52.55 (n=57), quantitative researchers had a mean rank of 62.45 (n=57).

On a less predictable note, there was a significant difference based on type of dissertation research on the barrier of choosing a dissertation topic (Z=2.1944; p=.0282). Choosing a topic was more problematic for quantitative researchers than for qualitative researchers (Quantitative: n=55; mean rank=64.09; Qualitative: n=59; mean rank=51.36).

Another significant difference based on type of dissertation research was the candidate's own perfectionism. Perfectionism was perceived as a significantly greater problem for individuals who conducted qualitative research than for individuals who conducted quantitative research (Z=1.7829; p=.0746). The mean rank for qualitative researchers was 63.19 (n=59) while the mean rank for quantitative researchers was 52.53 (n=56).

The remaining barriers did not differ significantly based on type of dissertation research being conducted by the doctoral candidate. (See Table 22 for a complete list of barriers compared by type of dissertation.)

Severity of Barriers Based on Gender: The four-point ratings for each of the 25 barriers were also analyzed based on gender, and two significant differences were found. The first of these was for the barrier of the candidate's own perfectionism (Z=1.7710; p=.0766). Women rated their perfectionism as more of a problem than men did their perfectionism (Women: n=51, mean rank=69.66; Men: n=74, mean rank=58.41).

The second difference in perceived barriers based on gender was on the barrier role conflict.[2] Women were significantly more likely to experience role conflict as a barrier to completing their dissertation than men (Z=1.8679; p=.0618; Women: mean rank=52.89, n=40; Men: mean rank=43.51, n=54).

Two other barriers neared levels of significance based on gender: (1) narrowing a topic and (2) perception of the dissertation director's perfectionism. Comparing males with females, women tended to have more difficulty than men in narrowing their topics. (Z=1.5064; p=.1320). Women: mean rank=67.94, n=52; Men: mean rank=58.57, n=72).

A second barrier nearing statistical significance based on gender was the perception of the director's perfectionism. Although not statistically significant, there was a tendency for men to view their dissertation directors as more perfectionistic than women viewed their directors (Z=1.5973; p=.1102; Men: mean rank=65.46, n=71; Women: mean rank=55.99, n=51). (See Table 23 for a complete list of barriers compared by gender.)

Forms of Emotional Support and Perceived Usefulness

In addition to rating the severity of barriers encountered while completing their dissertations, survey participants were also asked to rate forms of emotional support they used in completing their dissertations (Question 8). Using a four-point scale ranging from "little support" to

"great support," respondents were asked to rate support received from: (1) one's dissertation director, (2) a dissertation support group, (3) family members (including spouses or significant others), (4) fellow graduate students, (5) a higher power or spiritual source, (6) professional counseling, and (7) one's own determination. If a form of support was not employed while working on the dissertation, the respondent was asked to circle "NA" for "not applicable." Respondents' ratings were analyzed for differences in perceived usefulness based on type of dissertation research conducted and gender of the respondent.

Usefulness Based on Type of Dissertation: Only one form of support was perceived as being significantly more useful when the sample was divided by type of dissertation research conducted. Survey participants who conducted qualitative research rated the emotional support received from their dissertation directors higher than survey participants who conducted quantitative research (Z=1.6927; p=.0905; Qualitative: mean rank=65.91, n=62; Quantitative: mean rank=55.84, n=59).

Perceived usefulness of emotional support from a higher power or spiritual source neared statistical significance when the type of dissertation research was compared (Z=1.5176; p=.1291). Persons conducting qualitative research reported more support from a higher power or spiritual source than persons doing quantitative research (Qualitative: mean rank=44.40; n=39; Quantitative: mean rank=36.79; n=41).

Remaining forms of emotional support were not significantly different based on type of dissertation research. (See Table 24 for a complete list of support forms compared by dissertation type.)

Usefulness Based on Gender: Dividing survey participants by gender, one form of emotional support differed significantly in perceived

usefulness. Women who sought emotional support from a professional counselor were more likely to find that support beneficial than men who sought emotional support from a professional counselor (Z=1.7198; p=.0855; Women: mean rank=29.85, n=24; Men: mean rank=23.63, n=28). (See Table 25.)

Advice on How to Complete a Dissertation

The final item on the survey instrument was an open-ended question that asked the Communication PhD or EdD to offer future or present doctoral candidates advice on completing a dissertation (Question #19). Provided more often and punctuated more emphatically than any other advice was the following: DO NOT LEAVE THE DEGREE GRANTING INSTITUTION WITHOUT THE DEGREE IN HAND! (31.8%; n=42). The most memorable phrasing was a parody of Karl Mauldin's American Express advertisement: "Don't leave campus without it."

A few respondents, perhaps realizing that finances often dictate otherwise, offered advice for individuals who take employment before finishing their dissertations (3.1%, n=4). This advice included negotiating release time with one's employer and only accepting part-time employment. Yet another respondent advised that it is better to take out a loan than to accept employment before the dissertation is completed.

The second most frequently offered advice had the ring of parental authority. As a parent might speak to a child, these respondents advised ABDs to "DO IT" (9.8%; n=13). Variations in the phrasing of this advice included "Buckle down and do it" and "Like [the] Nike [commercial] says, 'Do it!'"

The third area of advice centered around choosing a dissertation director and committee members (10.6%; n=14). Seven of the respondents advised candidates to choose a supportive director (5.3%); six advised candidates to carefully choose committee members (4.5%); and one respondent

was very specific in advising future doctoral students not to attend "X" university (.8%).

Yet another area of advice dealt with means of preparing for the dissertation process (14.5%; n=19). Six of the respondents suggested that course work be used to develop the dissertation idea (n=4.5); nine suggested that the candidate choose a topic in which he or she is very interested (6.8%); and one respondent suggested getting a computer before beginning the dissertation (.8%). Other suggestions offered regarding preparation for the dissertation process included get experience with research methods (.8%; n=1); read a lot about the area of interest before starting the dissertation (.8%; n=1); and write a good proposal (.8%; n=1).

A portion of the advice was aimed at doctoral candidates in the midst of completing a dissertation (11.4%; n=15). This advice included: set a schedule (6.8%; n=9); break the dissertation into manageable pieces (2.3%; n=3); ask questions and get feedback from the committee as the dissertation progresses (1.5%; n=2); and do concentrated blocks of writing (.8%; n=1); .

The final type of advice dealt with keeping the dissertation in perspective (10.0%; n=14). Survey respondents advised that doctoral candidates keep the dissertation project realistic (6.1%; n=8); that one should not set one's career reputation on the dissertation (2.3%; n=3); that ABDs should find a dissertation support group (.8%; n=1); and to realize that everyone has problems with the dissertation (.8%; n=1).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The present study asked three primary questions: (1) What are the greatest barriers encountered by Communication doctoral students when completing their dissertations? (2) What forms of emotional support are perceived as most useful to dissertation completion? and (3) What advice

can Communication PhDs and EdDs offer to help present and future doctoral candidates succeed in completing a dissertation? Results of the first two questions will be discussed in this section of the paper. Results from the third question will be discussed in the succeeding section.

Disregarding all differences such as type of dissertation research conducted or number of years as an ABD, survey participants as a group most frequently cited the pressures and demands of employment as the greatest barrier to dissertation completion. The obvious solution is to finish the dissertation before accepting employment, but for many individuals this is not possible. Individuals who do not have the luxury of finishing the dissertation before accepting full-time employment are referred to Wright (1990) for suggestions on juggling a dissertation and a job.

No matter how the individual approaches finances during the dissertation process, he or she might find it helpful to know that different barriers are more common to different types of dissertation. If forewarned, the doctoral candidate may be able to avoid these barriers and finish the degree in a timely fashion, thereby shortening the amount of time he or she has to endure the financial burdens of graduate school. Going beyond the ranking of barriers and looking at ratings of severity, the present study found that different barriers are more problematic for different types of research. As could be expected, candidates conducting quantitative research struggled significantly more with data collection and data interpretation than individuals who conducted qualitative research. This is not an earth shattering discovery. Once quantitative researchers get past data collection and data interpretation, the project is near the end, but until the hurdles of data collection and interpretation are overcome, the dissertation struggle will be an uphill climb.

The result suggesting that quantitative researchers experience significantly more difficulty in choosing a topic than qualitative researchers, however, is less obvious. Unfortunately, an adequate explanation lies beyond the scope of the present study and only tentative hypotheses can be made. Perhaps qualitative researchers enter doctoral programs with more research ideas or are exposed to more ideas within their program of study than quantitative researchers. Maybe quantitative research in the field of Communication has reached the point where the obvious workable questions have been answered or maybe doctoral students who want to conduct a quantitative study become so overwhelmed by the vast amount of research already done in their area of interest that they have difficulty deciding how to contribute to the existing body of knowledge. Whatever the reason, quantitative researchers need to start their search for a suitable topic as soon as they enter the doctoral program in order to overcome this barrier. Suggestions on how this may be accomplished are offered later in this paper.

Not only do quantitative and qualitative candidates differ in the struggles of choosing a topic, collecting data and interpreting data, they also differ in the severity of their own perfectionism as a barrier, but this time, the difference is to the detriment of the qualitative researcher. Individuals conducting qualitative research are significantly more likely to find their own perfectionism to be a barrier to dissertation completion than individuals conducting quantitative research. This difference may stem from the solace quantitative researchers take in their numbers. In quantitative research, the data are collected, the numbers crunched, the statistics interpreted, and if the research design was strong and the measuring instruments reliable, the doctoral candidate doesn't have

to debate whether the research perspective was correct. The p value will decide that. The qualitative researcher, on the other hand, does not have statistical analysis to hide behind. Without the shield afforded by numbers, the qualitative researcher may feel compelled to be overly perfectionistic and in so doing, his or her perfectionism keeps the dissertation from timely completion.

A double whammy regarding a candidate's own perfectionism occurs when the candidate conducting qualitative research is also female. As suggested by the present study, women are significantly more likely to let their own perfectionism stand in the way of dissertation completion than men are. Again, the scope of the present study does not explain why, but some interesting questions are raised. Are women truly more demanding of themselves than men are or do women only feel they are more demanding of themselves than men?

Previous research has suggested several reasons that could explain why women would be more perfectionistic in their academic endeavors than men. In the mid-1970s Holmstrom and Holmstrom (1974) wrote: "The deep-down conviction that women will waste their training by getting married and raising children appears to plague both administrators and faculty on one hand, and women students themselves, on the other" (p. 17). Research from the early 1980s suggests the stereotype continued into the next decade as Follett, Andberg, and Hendel (1982) reported male and female students believed there was sex discrimination with most of it to the females' disadvantage.

Perhaps women in the present sample were forced into perfectionistic tendencies in response to prevailing attitudes and discrimination. Perhaps by being perfectionistic, they were trying to prove their legitimacy as

doctoral candidates to others and themselves. In an effort to eradicate sex discriminatory stereotypes, Levy (1982) offers a series of suggestions to women including ways to project a professional, equal status image in the predominantly male educational system. Many of these suggestions are simply an avoidance of stereotypical female behavior: e.g., avoid answering the communal phone and avoid cleaning up after meetings. Whether techniques such as these help women gain acceptance as legitimate doctoral candidates remains to be see as the 1990s begin to unfold.

Not only do women perceive their own perfectionism as a greater barrier to dissertation completion than men do, but women also perceive role conflict as a greater barrier to completion than men do. The struggle of choosing which role to play is significantly more severe for women than men. Previous research by Tittle and Denker (1980) suggests that women are more likely than men to experience role conflict resulting from being a parent and student, and Levstik (1982) calls simultaneous pursuit of a PhD, a marriage, and family "the impossible dream." However, role conflict does not disappear when women are unmarried and without children. They still experience role conflict. To illustrate, Stryker, et al. (1985) provide the following excerpt from an interview with a female doctoral candidate:

> I remember feeling guilty. Guilty that I was not being enough of a friend, or sharing enough time. I am single, but still, with parents, brothers and sisters, personal friends. Invitations would come, I'd have to decline. People would call, I'd have to cut them short. When it goes on for months and months on end, people start forgetting about you. You get this feeling that they're not satisfied with your end of the relationship. I just remember continually trying to fight off a sense of guilt. (p. 14)

Men must certainly experience the same situations, but perhaps their emotional reaction is different. Even if men do experience guilt at having

to put the role of ABD first, the results of the present survey indicate that the guilt does not interfere with progress on the dissertation. In coping with this barrier, Menks and Tupper (1987) suggest that "Role models and support groups at the departmental level may be helpful" (p. 26). They also suggest that values clarification can be an important part of these meetings to help resolve role expectations and demands. References and suggested readings for forming a support group are discussed on page 32 of this paper.

Although not statistically significant, women tended to have more difficulty narrowing a topic than men. Once again, many factors probably interchange to produce these trends. Women may have more difficulty narrowing a topic because they are more critical of topics. Maybe they have more difficulty narrowing a topic because they are less apt to ask for advice from professors or may be less likely to receive advice when sought. Maybe women haven't been nurtured by members of the educational system regarding the ropes PhD/EdD work, and therefore women haven't gained the experience of narrowing a dissertation topic. If women are not receiving the same encouragement and assistance men are receiving, this type of sex discrimination could explain the significant difference in the present study where men were more likely to have published before completing their disserations than women were.

The tendency for men to see their directors as more perfectionistic than women see their directors is logical in light of the present study's finding that women are more demanding of themselves than men are. In other words, women already expect a great deal from themselves, and in comparison to the pressure women put on themselves, the pressure applied by their directors may be perceived as equal or less.

Regarding the perceived usefulness of various forms of emotional support, there was one significant difference based on gender of the candidate and one based on type of dissertation research conducted. The significant difference in emotional support based on gender of the candidate was perceived usefulness of support from professional counseling. Women who sought professional counseling to get through the dissertation process were significantly more likely to find it helpful than men. Once more, the present study cannot answer all of the questions that arise from this comparison. It isn't logical to assume that men had inferior counselors so other factors must account for the difference in perceived usefulness. Perhaps women are more open to advice offered in professional counseling while men resist it. Or maybe men and women seek professional counseling for different reasons related to the dissertation and the difference in reasons results in a difference in perceived usefulness of professional counseling. Clearly, further research is needed to answer these questions, but for whatever reason, women find professional counseling more beneficial in completing a dissertation than men do.

The significant difference based on type of dissertation research indicated that qualitative researchers saw their directors as more supportive than quantitative researchers. Here again, the difference may be due to the underlying natures of the types of research. Quantitative research is often less "personal" than qualitative research. In quantitative research, human experience is reduced to numbers and formulas. For the most part, the ABD and her director stand "outside" the research and "look in" to it. With qualitative research, the ABD is often advised by her dissertation director to become personally involved in the study, to see the world through the eyes of the subject(s). Because the two types of

research require different emotional approaches by the researcher and the director, the feelings the ABD has toward the director may also be different.

Although not statistically significant, there was a tendency for qualitative researchers to report more support from a higher power or spiritual source than quantitative researchers. Again, the scope of the present study does not provide answers to the "why," but the trend supports existing stereotypes associated with quantitative and qualitative researchers. Stereotypically, quantitative researchers are depicted as individuals who believe only in the measurable and tangible. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, are stereotyped as believers in the unseen.

Although isolated examples, two respondents in the present study provided written commentary illustrative of these stereotypes. A quantitative survey respondent wrote beside the spiritual source/higher power item on the survey "Come now!", suggesting disbelief that someone would rely on a spiritual source to survive a dissertation. Yet, a qualitative survey participant identified in the margin of the survey the spiritual source of support used for dissertation completion.

In preliminary stages of developing the survey instrument, use of a higher power as a source of emotional support was not originally included until an interview with a recent PhD graduate. This person couched the statement in tentative terms and basically said, "I hope you won't think less of me, but reliance on a spiritual source is really what got me through my dissertation." Once again, further research is needed to fully explore and explain this trend.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE AND PRESENT DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

The median length of a doctoral dissertation is 225 pages, and from start to finish, it takes an average of fourteen work months or 2,450 hours to complete over the course of one to three years (Davis & Parker, 1979, pp. 17-18). As Sternberg (1981) points out: "Any way one cuts it, the doctoral dissertation is not for the fainthearted" (p. 40). But it is possible to survive a dissertation marathon, and "The key to completing a dissertation is not brilliance or even inspiration, but organization" (Sternberg, 1981, p. 57). Using advice offered by survey participants in the present study, this section of the paper offers a chronological discussion of dissertation survival techniques.

In order to get organized, a doctoral candidate must first know what to expect in a doctoral program. This writer suggests that at least one month before classes start, the new doctoral student purchase and read one or more of the following dissertation guidebooks: Sternberg's (1981) How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation which costs $8.95, Mauch and Birch's (1989) Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation which costs $35.00, or Davis and Parker's (1979) Writing the Doctoral Dissertation which costs $6.95. Additionally, if the student has not already read a doctoral dissertation, he or she is advised to obtain several from the university library or Communication department and become familiar with the format and structure.

Next, the student will benefit by scheduling a meeting with a recent graduate of the doctoral program. Without any formal structure to the meeting, the new graduate student simply asks the recent graduate to talk about his or her experience as a doctoral candidate and specifically about the dissertation. Additionally, the new graduate student might want to

meet with a candidate who recently became ABD. This is a means of "learning the ropes" of that particular graduate school. Graduate schools, like graduate students, are each unique.

Learning what to expect from a particular graduate program is only part of the preparation process. One also needs the proper equipment. As one survey participant suggested, it is a good idea to purchase a computer system. Ideally, the graduate student would purchase a computer and printer several months before classes start and become computer literate before that first paper was due and be a computer wizard by the time the dissertation proposal was due. However, the student may want to wait until he or she becomes an official graduate student because many universities participate in computer purchase programs where equipment is available at a reduced cost. No matter what the final cost, the computer will definitely pay for itself by eliminating typist or word processor fees and their accompanying frustrations.

Regarding the purchase of a printer, the present writer suggests the purchase of a laser printer because its print will be acceptable to the graduate office when the final dissertation copy is due. Also, dissertation committee members will appreciate the clean print produced by a laser printer when they read the proposal and dissertation drafts. Furthermore, the high quality print is needed to submit articles based on the dissertation to professional journals since the most thorough plan for doctoral study includes an agenda of one or two publications drawn from the dissertation research.

Once the beginning doctoral candidate has a basic idea of what to expect in a doctoral program, he or she needs to develop a game plan for completing the program. Survey participants suggested that doctoral

students enroll in courses that help focus on a dissertation idea. The best course to use as preparation for the dissertation is a research methods class, and the first semester or quarter of study is an excellent time to enroll. Typically, students have to write a research proposal as part of the class, and if taken seriously, the assignment can be the first draft of the real dissertation proposal.

Term paper assignments in other classes can also serve as opportunities to fine-tune or explore research ideas. Particularly helpful are classes on theory building and research methodologies. With a little foresight, class assignments can be used to write drafts of the dissertation proposal, literature review, and methodology section. As Simpson (1986) writes: "A crucial point that needs to be made to graduate students in the early days of their careers is that reading should be done, and term paper topics considered, with a future dissertation in mind" (p. 118).

Yet, communication theory and research courses are not the only courses a doctoral candidate can use to develop dissertation ideas. Tool courses are also excellent classes for testing dissertation ideas, and survey participants recommended that students <u>not</u> postpone these courses to the end of the program of study. If the student already has a dissertation idea, the tool courses will make more sense when concepts are applied to his or her own dissertation idea. Second, if the student does not have a dissertation idea, examples used to explicate the tools may spark one.

Graduate faculty and graduate program directors can also play an active role in helping students use course work to focus on dissertation ideas. Simpson (1986) suggests that "the ideal solution would lie in the provision of courses which focus on the formulation and application of

different research models. These would encourage students to combine attention to theory with attention to method" (p. 114-115). He goes on to describe two methods courses required of all doctoral students at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

So before classes even start, the organized graduate student has become familiar with doctoral study in general, familiar with doctoral study at his or her graduate school, become computer literate and given some thought to using course work as a means of focusing on a dissertation idea. The new doctoral student would benefit even further by 'mapping' out his or her program of study, including tentative deadlines for phases of the dissertation process. For a list of items to include on a 'map' of graduate study, one can refer to Davis and Parker's (1979) excellent checklist inside the back cover of their book Writing the Doctoral Dissertation. Their checklist includes many of the aforementioned items and cross-references them with chapters in their book. Mauch and Birch (1989) provide a time line specific to dissertations on page 5 of their book Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation, and Martin (1979) suggests that "A good rule of thumb is to plan for a dissertation or thesis to take from one-fourth to one-third more time than originally expected" (p. 9).

Through foresight and planning, doctoral candidates can use course work to uncover dissertation ideas and efficiently move from a vague idea to a tangible dissertation proposal. As indicated by one survey participant, the best way to avoid problems with the actual dissertation is to write a thorough proposal. Candidates might want to use a pre-proposal meeting to get feedback from the committee on the basic dissertation idea

before actually writing the proposal and to work closely with one's director when drafting the proposal.

Survey participants emphasized that it's a lot easier to keep a doctoral program on track and a dissertation in perspective when working with a "supportive" dissertation director. How "supportive" is defined will depend on the specific needs of the student. For some candidates, "supportive" is defined as a director who gives great latitude on the project. For another candidate, "supportive" is a director who keeps close tabs on every step of the process. Talking with previous graduate students is one way of assessing the type of support a director provides. Taking a class from the professor is another way to assess the type of support that person is capable of giving. Whoever is chosen as the director, Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain (1983) believe that the advisee, not the advisor, is responsible for seeing that the relationship is built on openness, trust, symmetry of opportunity, and enlightenment.

No matter what qualities candidates seek in their dissertation directors, it certainly pays to shop around, and candidates may want to consider "interviewing" professors for the position of director by meeting with the professor on the pretense of discussing potential dissertation topics. Elements of the meeting, such as the professor's reaction to the topic and general level of enthusiasm, can be used to determine whether this person would be a good choice for director.

Not only is the choice of director critical, but so is the choice of committee members. A candidate will find the dissertation and its evolution to be stronger if the dissertation committee is chosen as a "project team" would be chosen. The analogy to a project team is used because an efficient, productive dissertation committee is comprised of

individuals who have been chosen for a specific skill or talent that when combined with the skills and talents of other committee members will allow the candidate to produce the best dissertation possible. For example, in a quantitative study at least four experts are needed on the "team:" 1) a statistician, 2) a theorist, 3) a troubleshooter, and 4) a subject area resource person. Depending on the candidate's individual needs and confidence about the dissertation process, a fifth "expert" would be a caregiver (someone to give emotional support to the candidate).

By purposely choosing committee members to serve particular functions, the candidate has assembled a panel of experts whose skills are complementary, thus enhancing the final dissertation product. The candidate might consider sharing the plan of task division with members of the committee so they can better play their roles. Perhaps such a tactic would have alleviated the type of frustration Young experienced when writing her dissertation (1988):

> When I was writing mine I had no problem writing[,] just trying to remain sane while my committee of seven usually totally disagreeing with each other [debated] on what priorities I should adhere to. . . . I got my Ph.D. but I am not sure about the sanity! (CRTNET #128)

Yet, for a great number of doctoral candidates in the present study, the barrier to completion did not lie outside of themselves, but within themselves. Survey participants in the present study experienced three types of internal barriers: lethargy, depression, and perfectionism.

In suggesting ways to deal with lethargy, some respondents reported concentrated blocks of time were helpful, while others indicated that a couple of hours a day were more beneficial. Martin (1980) suggests two-hour blocks of time because they "do not produce lasting fatigue or the

feeling that the task is aversive." (p. 74). Whichever method is used, doctoral students need to treat the dissertation as a job and "clock in" for a set number of hours every week. If hours are missed one day, they must be made up later that week.

Sometimes, however, the doctoral candidate may be putting in the time, but still feel no progress is being made. Modifying a technique suggested by Burns (1980) in the treatment of depression, the present author devised a dissertation progress log (Appendix B). The log provided a tangible record of the incremental progress and relief from the feeling of "I'm not getting anywhere." The log also served as a time card so when "X" number of hours were reached, the "work week" was complete.

In addition to keeping track of progress through a device such as a dissertation progress log, ABDs can employ a variety of behavior modification techniques to get themselves through unpleasant dissertation tasks. For example, upon completion of a painful chapter re-write a minor luxury such a new compact disk or a long bath could be used as a reward. Martin (1980) provides a helpful chapter on self-control techniques for dissertation writing.

While rewards may serve as motivation for some doctoral candidates, they may not work for others. Harris (1974) offers an ingenious technique that can be used by individuals who respond best to avoidance of aversive situations. Harris cites the case study of a woman who had completed all work on her dissertation except the actual writing. To "encourage" the woman to begin writing, she was instructed to take fifty envelopes and address them to an organization of which she did <u>not</u> approve. Into each of the 50 envelopes, she was to put the same amount of money and give all of the envelopes to a friend. At the end of each week, if the woman did not

have five or more pages written on the dissertation, the friend was to mail one of the envelopes to the disliked organization with instructions that the enclosed money was a donation. For each week the woman wrote five or more pages on the dissertation, the friend returned an envelope and its monetary contents.

The process was modified after the first draft of 48 pages was reviewed by the committee. To encourage the woman to complete the rewrite, three new envelopes were addressed to the disliked organization. This time, each envelope contained an increased amount of money and a note asking that someone from the organization call on the woman. The friend was to mail the first envelope if the rewrite was not complete in six days; the second envelope after eleven days if the rewrite was still incomplete, and the third envelope after thirteen days if the rewrite was still incomplete. The rewrite was complete before six days elapsed, and using this technique, the woman received her degree within the year.

The second type of internal barrier is depression, and as noted by Benson (1988), "The feeling of depression is a bane of scholarship and writing" (CRTNET #127). If a candidate cannot find a director or committee member who can keep the dissertation in perspective, there are two alternatives: professional counseling and a dissertation support group. To illustrate the use of professional counseling for dissertation anxiety, the reader is referred to Glover, Smith, and Zaretsky's (1982) case study of a graduate student who sought professional counseling when his dissertation was at a standstill.

If professional counseling is not a viable option, an effective alternative can be found in a dissertation support group. For details and guidelines, the reader is referred to Stalker's (1990) "Misery Loves

Company and Other Important Functions of a Dissertation Support Group" and Sternberg's (1981) How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation. An excellent discussion of social support systems in general can be found in Albrecht and Adelman's book, Communicating Social Support (1987), and their Human Communication Research article (1984), "Social Support and Life Stress."

The third type of internal barrier is the candidate's own perfectionism. Representative of this barrier is the following anecdote that appeared on the Communication Research and Theory Network (MIK@CORNELLA, 1988):

> A friend's mother once told her (as the friend entered her 4th or 5th year of dissertation writing) "There are two kinds of dissertations--perfect and done." (CRTNET #129)

The desire to produce a perfect dissertation is not uncommon---unrealistic, yes----uncommon, no. Recalling from the introduction of this paper, Mauch and Birch's (1989) delineation of the purpose of a dissertation, not one of those purposes was to produce a perfect product.

There are two variations on the theme of perfectionism. In the first variation, candidates decide they will not put "pen to paper" until they know the product will be perfect. Consequently, no ideas are committed to paper. In reference to this type of perfectionism, Moody (1988) writes:

> Doctoral candidates are prone to get into a mental state where it is as if they expected to be taken out and shot after submitting the dissertation; they therefore get the idea that the dissertation must not only be perfect, but must also include every good idea they ever had. This naturally leads to terror and paralysis and ultimately to the dropping out of otherwise qualified people. (CRTNET #129)

A doctoral dissertation is a learning experience, unlike any previously attempted by a graduate student. As Daly (1988) points out, the dissertation is "a great operationalization of the concept 'learning how to learn.'" (CRTNET #127). If dissertations had to be perfect specimens of research, there wouldn't be standard sections that address limitations and recommendations for future research. Morgan (1988) offers this encouragement:

> I look back (fondly) at my thesis and dissertation as intriguing statements of where I was then, not unlike the way I look at other things (songs, poems, symphonies, films, letters) I produced at earlier stages. I did get good mileage (i.e., publications) out of them, but I am appalled at aspects of them and do not think they represent me now. But I learned from them -- not only about the topic, but about myself -- and they provide an invaluable yardstick to measure what I've learned since. (CRTNET #128)

In the words of MIK@CORNELLA (1988), "We should all hope that we can look back on what we are doing now and say something like -- that wasn't bad work considering how little I knew" (CRTNET #129).

In the second variation of perfectionism, a candidate submits a first draft and receives a rude awakening to reality. The same writing style that earned A's and B's on term papers, now comes back from committee members with more red ink than a Papermate pen factory. The candidate then suffers writing paralysis. Sigman (1988) elaborates on this type of perfectionism:

> Writing a dissertation is a lesson in humility; no matter how hard one tries, there is always more one can research, study, and write about any topic. . . . One of the most important things ABDs must learn is how to "let go" of one's writing. . . . (CRTNET #126)

In combatting this type of perfectionism, the candidate can expect every sentence in the dissertation to be rewritten or revised and not to take the comments personally. Emotional distance from the dissertation is often a

necessity for completion. No matter what methods are employed to survive the doctoral dissertation, survey participants in the present study advised doctoral candidates to keep the dissertation in perspective, not to set one's career reputation on it and to break the dissertation into manageable pieces.

Once the oral defense has been successfully completed, minor chapter revisions made, typographical errors corrected, and the final copy of the dissertation handed over to the graduate office, the new PhD or EdD may breathe a sigh of relief and never look at his or her dissertation again, but the advice given by survey participants in this study (and authors on the subject of dissertations) is "DON'T DELAY! USE YOUR DISSERTATION TO PRODUCE ONE OR TWO PUBLICATIONS BEFORE THE RESEARCH BECOMES DATED!" As noted by Benoit (1988),

> . . . dissertations are rarely publishable in their final form. Some (because of errors) may never be publishable. I suspect though, that more articles could be published out of dissertations except for two factors: disinclination to do the cuts and revisions necessary, and fatigue (or, if you will, boredom with the project). (CRTNET #128)

Phillips (1988) believes that "the best bet is to pull two or more themes from the dissertation and use each as the source of a separate written document" (CRTNET #123). Charland (1988), having rewritten parts of her dissertation for publication and served on a journal editorial board that often received condensed dissertations for consideration, echoes Phillips advice for converting dissertations to publications:

> My suggestion is that [the] author select what she considers to be her most fundamental or radical point, and put it forward in a virtually new essay. If there are several fundamental points, then produce several independent essays, which can refer to each other if necessary, but that can still stand alone. (CRTNET #123)

As an aid in converting a dissertation into a series of journal articles, Benson (1988) offers reference to Beth Luey's book, Handbook for Academic Authors (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), which includes a chapter on reworking dissertations for publication. Davis and Parker (1979), Martin (1980), Mauch and Birch (1989), and Sternberg (1979) also offer suggestions. The primary point by all of these sources is: Do not wait months or years before submitting articles based on the dissertation. The secondary point is: Accept the fact that the dissertation will have to be reworked for serious consideration as a journal article.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

As any other research endeavor in the social sciences, the present study has a number of limitations. First, as a study of doctoral dissertations, the paper is limited to the field of Communication. Thus, generalizability to other areas of the social sciences, humanities, and education is restricted.

Second, whenever people are asked to recall personal experiences, their responses are colored by the passage of time. Furthermore, when the personal experience may be emotionally charged, such as a miserable dissertation experience, the accuracy of recall may be distorted.

Third, anytime an attempt is made to quantify emotions, the numeric results will not provide a precise translation. Whether a four-point, five-point, or seven-point scale is used, there will always be inaccuracies as the researcher tries to capture numerically subjects' feelings. Whereas one respondent might have viewed his or her frustration on a particular barrier as "minor," another respondent who had experienced the same level of frustration may have labelled the barrier "not applicable."

Fourth, as pointed out by Vartuli (1982), "The Ph.D. process varies according to the individual pursuing the degree" (p. 1). Therefore, what worked for one person in completing a dissertation, may not work for the next person and what was a barrier for one individual may not be a barrier to another.

Finally, the nature of human communication means the sender and receiver may bypass each other in meaning. In reference to the present study, some terms on the survey needed further clarification (e.g., role conflict, support group). Likewise, respondents may have intended their advice to be taken one way and in the final analysis, the researcher may have interpreted it differently.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study has uncovered several areas of the dissertation process that are in need of further exploration. In particular, the following areas are suggested for further research: (1) Why do quantitative researchers have more difficulty choosing a dissertation topic than qualitative researchers? (2) Why are qualitative researchers more likely than quantitative researchers to let their perfectionistic tendencies become a barrier to dissertation completion? (3) Why do qualitative researchers perceive their dissertation directors as more supportive than quantitative researchers perceive their directors? (4) Why do women who seek professional counseling in relation to the dissertation perceive the support as more beneficial than men who seek professional counseling? (5) How can women alleviate the problems associated with role conflict? (6) Why are men more likely than women to publish before degree completion, and what can be done to help women publish sooner?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is no way to avoid the lonely days and lonely nights of completing a doctoral dissertation. A dissertation involves a great sense of dedication, determination, and stamina on the part of the candidate. As Eric Gould, dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Denver, points out, "Getting a graduate degree, especially a doctorate, is a special kind of education. . . . you absolutely must understand the commitment that's involved and the discipline that's expected" (Metzger, 1989, p. 2). Perhaps by discussing common barriers in the dissertation process and by offering suggestions on how to overcome those barriers, this paper will help present and future doctoral candidates in the field of Communication move from ABD to PhD or from ABD to EdD. After all, "the dissertation is followed by a career, not a blindfold and a cigarette" (Moody, 1988, CRTNET #129).

Endnotes

1. "ABD" refers to individuals who have completed all degree requirements except the dissertation, ergo the term ABD or "All But the Dissertation."
2. Role conflict, for purposes of this study, is defined as the struggle one experiences when juggling the demands of multiple roles. Role conflict results when the demands of every role cannot be met or when a decision cannot be made regarding which role should take top priority.

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TABLE 1

DECADE IN WHICH DOCTORATE WAS AWARDED

DECADE	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
1940s	2	1	3
1950s	3	0	3
1960s	13	3	16
1970s	26	18	44
1980s	31	32	63
1990	0	1	1
Missing			2
TOTALS:	75 (57.7%)	55 (42.3%)	132

TABLE 2

TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE DOCTORATE

(mean=4.867; range=10; mode=3; median=4)

Years	Frequency	Percent
2	15	11.4
3	29	22.0
4	29	22.0
5	12	9.1
6	14	10.6
7	12	9.1
8	6	4.5
9	4	3.0
10	1	.8
11	4	3.0
12	2	1.5
Missing data	4	3.0
TOTALS	132	100.0%

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF YEARS AS AN ABD

(mean=2.174; range=0; mode=1; median=1)

Years	Frequency	Percent
< 1	10	7.6
1	51	38.6
2	22	16.7
3	13	9.8
4	11	8.3
5	7	5.3
6	2	1.5
7	3	2.3
8	1	.8
9	1	.8
Missing data	11	8.3
TOTALS	132	100.0%

TABLE 4

PRIMARY SOURCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ABDS

WHILE COMPLETING THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Form of Financial Support	Frequency	Percent
Graduate Teaching Assistantship	48	36.4%
Teaching other than an Assistantship	47	35.6%
Spouse's Income	11	8.3%
Savings or Inheritance	8	6.1%
Employment other than Teaching	7	5.3%
GI Bill	4	3.0%
Grant Monies	2	1.5%
Loans	1	.8%
Missing Data	4	3.0%
TOTALS	132	100.0%

TABLE 5

FIRST GREATEST BARRIER

TO COMPLETING THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	18	13.6
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	13	9.8
Collection of Data	10	7.6
Typing/Word Processing	8	6.1
Setting Aside Time	7	5.3
Choosing a Topic	7	5.3
Data Interpretation	6	4.5
Financial Problems	6	4.5
Narrowing a Topic	5	3.8
Writing Chapters	5	3.8
Developing Methodology	4	3.0
Obstructionist Committee Member	4	3.0
Faculty Support for Research Idea	3	2.3
Accessibility of Director	3	2.3
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	3	2.3
Poor Mental Health/Depression	3	2.3
Role Conflict	3	2.3
Other: Physical Distance from Committee	3	2.3
Literature Review	2	1.5
Director Left	2	1.5
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	2	1.5
Re-writing Chapters	2	1.5
Marital/Relationship Stress	2	1.5
Poor Physical Health	2	1.5
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	2	1.5
Director's Perfectionism	1	.8
Other: Choosing a Director	1	.8
Other: Lack of Direction from Advisor	1	.8
Missing	4	3.0
TOTALS:	132	100.0%

TABLE 6

SECOND GREATEST BARRIER

TO COMPLETING THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Setting Aside Time	15	11.4
Job Related Pressures/Demands	12	9.1
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	8	6.1
Developing Methodology	6	4.5
Data Collection	6	4.5
Data Interpretation	6	4.5
Poor Mental Health/Depression	6	4.5
Narrowing a Topic	5	3.8
Financial Problems	5	3.8
Choosing a Topic	4	3.0
Director Leaves	4	3.0
Intransigent Committee Member	4	3.0
Writing Chapters	4	3.0
Typing/Word Processing	4	3.0
Role Conflict	4	3.0
Accessibility of Director	3	2.3
Review of the Literature	2	1.5
Obstructionist Committee Member	2	1.5
Re-writing Chapters	2	1.5
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	2	1.5
Poor Physical Health	2	1.5
Other: Physical Distance from Committee	2	1.5
Other: Unlike Anything Ever Attempted	2	1.5
Faculty Support for Research Idea	1	.8
Someone Else Publishes Research	1	.8
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	.8
Other: Pressure of Deadlines	1	.8
Other: Inter-Committee Conflict	1	.8
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	.8
Other: Giving Up "Normal" Life	1	.8
Listed Only One Greatest Barrier:	12	9.1
Missing	3	2.3
TOTALS:	132	100.0%

TABLE 7

THIRD GREATEST BARRIER

TO COMPLETING THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Setting Aside Time	13	9.8
Developing the Methodology	9	6.8
Typing/Word Processing	8	6.1
Poor Mental Health/Depression	8	6.1
Re-writing Chapters	7	5.3
Data Interpretation	6	4.5
Narrowing a Topic	6	4.5
Job Related Pressures/Demands	6	4.5
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	5	3.8
Marital/Relationship Stress	5	3.8
Collection of Data	4	3.0
Obstructionist Committee Member	4	3.0
Writing Chapters	4	3.0
Role Conflict	4	3.0
Faculty Support for Research Idea	2	1.5
Accessibility of Director	2	1.5
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	2	1.5
Financial Problems	2	1.5
Choosing a Topic	1	.8
Review of the Literature	1	.8
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	.8
Other: Pressure of Deadlines	1	.8
Other: Physical Distance from Committee	1	.8
Other: Unlike Anything Ever Attempted	1	.8
Listed Only One Greatest Barrier	12	9.1
Listed Only Two Greatest Barriers	13	9.8
Missing	4	3.0
TOTALS:	132	99.9%

TABLE 8
GREATEST BARRIER FOR CANDIDATES WHO REQUIRED 5 OR MORE YEARS TO COMPLETE THE DOCTORATE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	10	18.2
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	8	14.5
Financial Problems	5	9.1
Choosing a Topic	4	7.3
Interpretation of Data	3	5.5
Accessibility of Director	3	5.5
Role Conflict	3	5.5
Developing the Methodology	2	3.6
Director Left/Took Sabbatical/Died	2	3.6
Narrowing the Topic	1	1.8
Faculty Support for Research Idea	1	1.8
Collection of Data for Analysis	1	1.8
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	1.8
Writing Chapters	1	1.8
Re-writing Chapters	1	1.8
Typing/Word Processing	1	1.8
Director's Perfectionism	1	1.8
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	1.8
Poor Physical Health	1	1.8
Setting Aside Time	1	1.8
Other	1	1.8
Other	1	1.8
Missing	2	3.6
TOTALS:	55	99.8%

TABLE 9
GREATEST BARRIER FOR CANDIDATES WHO REQUIRED 4 OR LESS YEARS TO COMPLETE THE DOCTORATE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Collection of Data	9	12.3
Job Related Pressures/Demands	7	9.6
Setting Aside Time	6	8.2
Typing/Word Processing	6	8.2
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	5	6.8
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	4	5.5
Writing Chapters	4	5.5
Choosing a Topic	3	4.1
Narrowing the Topic	3	4.1
Interpretation of Data	3	4.1
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	3	4.1
Poor Mental Health/Lethargy/Depression	3	4.1
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	3	4.1
Review of the Literature	2	2.7
Developing a Methodology	2	2.7
Faculty Support of Research Idea	1	1.4
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	1.4
Re-writing Chapters	1	1.4
Financial Problems	1	1.4
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	1.4
Poor Physical Health	1	1.4
Other: Choosing a Director	1	1.4
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	1.4
Missing	2	2.7
TOTALS:	73	100.0%

TABLE 10
GREATEST BARRIER FOR CANDIDATES WHO WERE
ABD FOR ONE YEAR OR LESS

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Typing/Word Processing	7	11.5
Data Collection	5	8.2
Setting Aside Time	5	8.2
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	4	6.6
Writing Chapters	4	6.6
Job Related Pressures/Demands	4	6.6
Choosing a Topic	3	4.9
Interpretation of Data	3	4.9
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	3	4.9
Poor Mental Health/Lethargy/Depression	3	4.9
Faculty Support for Research Idea	2	3.3
Review of the Literature	2	3.3
Developing the Methodology	2	3.3
Financial Problems	2	3.3
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	2	3.3
Narrowing the Topic	1	1.6
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	1	1.6
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	1.6
Poor Physical Health	1	1.6
Role Conflict	1	1.6
Other: Choosing a Director	1	1.6
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	1.6
Missing	3	4.9
TOTALS:	61	99.9%

TABLE 11
GREATEST BARRIER FOR CANDIDATES WHO WERE
ABD FOR TWO YEARS OR MORE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	11	18.3
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	9	15.0
Narrowing the Topic	4	6.7
Financial Problems	4	6.7
Choosing a Topic	3	5.0
Data Collection	3	5.0
Interpretation of Data	3	5.0
Accessibility of Director	3	5.0
Developing the Methodology	2	3.3
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	2	3.3
Re-writing Chapters	2	3.3
Role Conflict	2	3.3
Faculty Support for Research Idea	1	1.7
Director Left/Sabbatical/Died	1	1.7
Writing Chapters	1	1.7
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	1	1.7
Director's Perfectionism	1	1.7
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	1.7
Poor Physical Health	1	1.7
Setting Aside Time	1	1.7
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	1	1.7
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	1.7
Other: Lack of Direction from Advisor	1	1.7
Missing	1	1.7
TOTALS:	60	100.3%

TABLE 12
GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressure/Demands	14	22.2
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	6	9.5
Narrowing the Topic	4	6.3
Developing the Methodology	4	6.3
Typing/Word Processing	4	6.3
Setting Aside Time	3	4.8
Choosing a Topic	2	3.2
Faculty Support for Research Idea	2	3.2
Review of the Literature	2	3.2
Collection of Data	2	3.2
Interpretation of Data	2	3.2
Accessibility of Director	2	3.2
Writing Chapters	2	3.2
Re-writing Chapters	2	3.2
Financial Problems	2	3.2
Poor Physical Health	2	3.2
Role Conflict	2	3.2
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	1.6
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	1	1.6
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	1.6
Poor Mental Health/Depression/Lethargy	1	1.6
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	1	1.6
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	1.6
Missing	0	
TOTALS:	63	100.2%

TABLE 13
GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCHERS

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Data Collection	7	11.9
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	6	10.2
Choosing a Topic	5	8.5
Job Related Pressures/Demands	4	6.8
Interpretation of Data	4	6.8
Typing/Word Processing	4	6.8
Financial Problems	4	6.8
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	3	5.1
Writing Chapters	3	5.1
Timely Return of Drafts from Faculty	3	5.1
Setting Aside Time	3	5.1
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	2	3.4
Narrowing the Topic	1	1.7
Faculty Support for Research Idea	1	1.7
Director Left/Took Sabbatical/Died	1	1.7
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	1.7
Poor Mental Health/Lethargy/Depression	1	1.7
Other: Choosing a Director	1	1.7
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	1.7
Other:Lack of Direction from Advisor	1	1.7
Missing	3	5.1
TOTALS:	59	100.3%

TABLE 14

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO WERE ABD FOR ONE YEAR OR LESS

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	3	12.0
Typing/Word Processing	3	12.0
Choosing a Topic	2	8.0
Review of the Literature	2	8.0
Developing the Methodology	2	8.0
Financial Problems	2	8.0
Narrowing the Topic	1	4.0
Faculty Support for Research Idea	1	4.0
Data Collection	1	4.0
Interpretation of Data	1	4.0
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	1	4.0
Writing Chapters	1	4.0
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	1	4.0
Poor Physical Health	1	4.0
Poor Mental Health/Lethargy/Depression	1	4.0
Setting Aside Time	1	4.0
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	4.0
TOTALS:	25	100.0

TABLE 15

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO WERE ABD FOR TWO YEARS OR MORE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	8	24.2
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	5	15.2
Narrowing the Topic	3	9.1
Developing the Methodology	2	6.1
Accessibility of Director	2	6.1
Re-Writing Chapters	2	6.1
Role Conflict	2	6.1
Faculty Support for Research Idea	1	3.0
Collection of Data	1	3.0
Interpretation of Data	1	3.0
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	3.0
Writing Chapters	1	3.0
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	3.0
Poor Physical Health	1	3.0
Setting Aside Time	1	3.0
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	1	3.0
TOTALS:	33	99.9%

TABLE 16

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO WERE ABD FOR ONE YEAR OR LESS

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Data Collection	4	12.9
Typing/Word Processing	4	12.9
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	3	9.7
Writing Chapters	3	9.7
Setting Aside Time	3	9.7
Interpretation of Data	2	6.5
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	2	6.5
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	2	6.5
Choosing a Topic	1	3.2
Faculty Support of Research Idea	1	3.2
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	1	3.2
Poor Mental Health/Lethargy/Depression	1	3.2
Job Related Pressures/Demands	1	3.2
Other: Choosing a Director	1	3.2
Missing	2	6.5
TOTALS:	31	100.1%

TABLE 17

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO WERE ABD FOR TWO YEARS OR MORE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Financial Problems	4	17.4
Choosing a Topics	3	13.0
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	3	13.0
Job Related Pressures/Demands	3	13.0
Interpretation of Data	2	8.7
Narrowing the Topic	1	4.3
Collection of Data for Analysis	1	4.3
Director Left/Sabbatical/Died	1	4.3
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	4.3
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	1	4.3
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	4.3
Other: Lack of Director from Advisor	1	4.3
Missing	1	4.3
TOTALS:	23	99.5%

TABLE 18

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO REQUIRED FOUR YEARS OR LESS TO COMPLETE THE DOCTORATE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	6	18.8
Narrowing the Topic	3	9.4
Typing/Word Processing	3	9.4
Choosing a Topic	2	6.3
Literature Review	2	6.3
Developing the Methodology	2	6.3
Data Collection	2	6.3
Setting Aside Time	2	6.3
Interpretation of Data	1	3.1
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	1	3.1
Writing Chapters	1	3.1
Re-Writing Chapters	1	3.1
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	1	3.1
Financial Problems	1	3.1
Poor Physical Health	1	3.1
Poor Mental Health/Depression/Lethargy	1	3.1
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	1	3.1
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	3.1
Missing	0	
TOTALS:	32	100.1%

TABLE 19

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO REQUIRED FIVE YEARS OR MORE TO COMPLETE THE DOCTORATE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Job Related Pressures/Demands	7	25.9
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	5	18.5
Developing the Methodology	2	7.4
Accessibility of Director	2	7.4
Role Conflict	2	7.4
Faculty Support of Idea	1	3.7
Interpretation of Data	1	3.7
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	3.7
Writing Chapters	1	3.7
Re-Writing Chapters	1	3.7
Financial Problems	1	3.7
Marital/Relationship Stress	1	3.7
Poor Physical Health	1	3.7
Setting Aside Time	1	3.7
Missing	0	
TOTALS:	27	99.9%

TABLE 20

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO REQUIRED FOUR YEARS OR LESS TO COMPLETE THE DOCTORATE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Data Collection	6	17.1
Obstructionistic Committee Member(s)	3	8.6
Writing Chapters	3	8.6
Timely Return of Drafts by Faculty	3	8.6
Typing/Word Processing	3	8.6
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	3	8.6
Setting Aside Time	3	8.6
Interpretation of Data	2	5.7
Other:Physical Distance from Committee	2	5.7
Choosing a Topic	1	2.9
Faculty Support of Idea	1	2.9
Intransigent Committee Member(s)	1	2.9
Poor Mental Health/Depression/Lethargy	1	2.9
Job Related Pressures/Demands	1	2.9
Other: Choosing a Director	1	2.9
Missing	1	2.9
TOTALS:	35	100.4%

TABLE 21

GREATEST BARRIER FOR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCHERS
WHO REQUIRED FIVE YEARS OR MORE TO COMPLETE THE DOCTORATE

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Choosing a Topic	4	16.7
Financial Problems	4	16.7
Candidate's Own Perfectionism	3	12.5
Job Related Pressures/Demands	3	12.5
Interpretation of Data	2	8.3
Narrowing the Topic	1	4.2
Data Collection	1	4.2
Director Left/Took Sabbatical/Died	1	4.2
Typing/Word Processing	1	4.2
Other: Faculty Didn't Care	1	4.2
Other: Lack of Direction from Advisor	1	4.2
Missing	2	8.3
TOTALS:	24	100.2%

TABLE 22

BARRIERS TO COMPLETING THE DISSERTATION:
COMPARISON OF SEVERITY BASED ON TYPE OF DISSERTATION

MANN-WHITNEY U
WILCOXAN RANK SUM W TEST
(All scores have been corrected for ties)

Choosing a Topic:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 55			n = 59
Mean Rank = 64.09			Mean = 51.36
U = 1260.0	W = 3525.0	Z = 2.1944	2-tailed p = .0282

Narrowing a Topic:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 54			n = 61
Mean Rank = 55.16			Mean = 60.52
U = 1493.5	W = 2978.5	Z = .9053	2-tailed p = .3653

Faculty Support of Research Idea:

Quantitative Researcher:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 54			n = 58
Mean Rank = 57.99			Mean Rank = 55.11
U = 1485.5	W = 3131.5	Z = .5129	2-tailed p = .6080

Review of Literature:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 56			n = 61
Mean Rank = 60.88			Mean Rank = 57.28
U = 1603.0	W = 3409.0	Z = .6223	2-tailed p = .5337

Developing a Methodology:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 56			n = 62
Mean Rank = 60.29			Mean = 58.78
U = 1691.5	W = 3376.5	Z = .2496	2-tailed p = .8029

Collection of Data for Analysis:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 58			n = 58
Mean Rank = 67.14			Mean Rank = 49.86
U = 1181.0	W = 3894.0	Z = 2.8830	2-tailed p = .0039

Interpretation of Data:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 57			n = 57
Mean Rank = 62.45			Mean Rank = 52.55
U = 1342.5	W = 3559.5	Z = 1.6872	2-tailed p = .0916

Accessibility of Director:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 55			n = 59
Mean Rank = 59.90			Mean Rank = 55.26
U = 1490.5	W = 3294.5	Z = .8355	2-tailed p = .4034

Director Left/Took Sabbatical/Died:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 28			n = 33
Mean Rank = 32.09			Mean Rank = 30.08
U = 431.5	W = 898.5	Z = .5189	2-tailed p = .6038

Intransigent Committee Member(s):

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 40			n = 42
Mean Rank = 38.50			Mean Rank = 44.36
U = 720.0	W = 1540.0	Z = 1.2289	2-tailed p = .2191

Obstructionist Committee Member(s):

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 40			n = 42
Mean Rank = 39.49			Mean Rank = 43.42
U = 759.5	W = 1579.5	Z = .8404	2-tailed p = .4007

Writing the Chapters:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n =57			n = 60
Mean Rank = 60.08			Mean Rank = 57.97
U = 1648.5	W = 3424.5	Z = .3518	2-tailed p = .7250

Re-writing the Chapters:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 56			n = 58
Mean Rank = 55.59			Mean Rank = 59.34
U = 1517.0	W = 3113.0	Z = .6396	2-tailed p = .5224

Timely Return of Drafts by Committee Members:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 53			n = 56
Mean Rank = 53.95			Mean Rank = 55.99
U = 1428.5	W = 2859.5	Z = .3948	2-tailed p = .6930

Someone Else Published the Research Idea:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 27			n = 30
Mean Rank = 28.61			Mean Rank = 29.35
U = 394.5	W = 772.5	Z = .3420	2-tailed p = .7323

Typing or Word Processing:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 53			n = 60
Mean Rank = 56.58			Mean Rank = 57.37
U = 1568.0	W = 2999.0	Z = .1327	2-tailed p = .8945

Candidate's Own Perfectionism:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 56			n = 59
Mean Rank = 52.53			Mean Rank = 63.19
U = 1345.5	W = 2941.5	Z = 1.7829	2-tailed p = .0746

Director's Perfectionism:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 53			n = 60
Mean Rank = 59.93			Mean Rank = 54.41
U = 1434.5	W = 3176.5	Z = .9823	2-tailed p = .3260

Financial Problems:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 48			n = 51
Mean Rank = 51.70			Mean Rank = 48.40
U = 1142.5	W = 2481.5	Z = .6431	2-tailed p = .5202

Marital or Relationship Stress:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 50			n = 46
Mean Rank = 47.48			Mean Rank = 49.61
U = 1099.0	W = 2282.0	Z = .4115	2-tailed p = .6807

Poor Physical Health:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 37			n = 42
Mean Rank = 37.51			Mean Rank = 42.19
U = 685.0	W = 1388.0	Z = 1.2903	2-tailed p = .1970

Poor Mental Health/Depression/Lethargy:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 44			n = 50
Mean Rank = 45.33			Mean Rank = 49.41
U = 1004.5	W = 1994.5	Z = .7919	2-tailed p = .4284

Role Conflict:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 44			n = 45
Mean Rank = 43.43			Mean Rank = 46.53
U = 921.0	W = 1911.0	Z = .6419	2-tailed p = .5209

Job Related Pressures and Demands:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 50			n = 59
Mean Rank = 53.00			Mean Rank = 56.69
U = 1375.0	W = 2650.0	Z = .6289	2-tailed p = .5294

Setting Aside Time for the Dissertation:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 55			n = 59
Mean Rank = 56.16			Mean Rank = 58.75
U = 1549.0	W = 3089.0	Z = .4320	2-tailed p = .6658

Other Barriers:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 7			n = 10
Mean Rank = 7.29			Mean Rank = 10.20
U = 23.0	W = 51.0	Z = 1.2876	2-tailed p = .1979

TABLE 23

BARRIERS TO COMPLETING THE DISSERTATION:
COMPARISON OF SEVERITY BASED ON GENDER

MANN-WHITNEY U
WILCOXAN RANK SUM W TEST
(All scores have been corrected for ties)

Choosing a Topic:
Men: n = 73 Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 65.51 Mean Rank = 58.19
U = 1641.5 W = 2967.5 Z = 1.1914 2-tailed p = .2335

Narrowing a Topic:
Men: n = 72 Women: n = 52
Mean Rank = 58.57 Mean Rank = 67.94
U = 1589.0 W = 3533.0 Z = 1.5064 2-tailed p = .1320

Faculty Support of Research Idea:
Men: n = 72 Women: n = 49
Mean Rank = 59.22 Mean Rank = 63.61
U = 1636.0 W = 3117.0 Z = .7402 2-tailed p = .4592

Review of Literature:
Men: n = 75 Women: n = 52
Mean Rank = 65.87 Mean Rank = 61.30
U = 1809.5 W = 3187.5 Z = .7437 2-tailed p = .4571

Developing a Methodology:
Men: n = 75 Women: n = 53
Mean Rank = 64.87 Mean Rank = 63.97
U = 1959.5 W = 3390.5 Z = .1410 2-tailed p = .8879

Collection of Data for Analysis:
Men: n = 74 Women: n = 52
Mean Rank = 64.14 Mean Rank = 62.60
U = 1877.0 W = 3255.0 Z = .2426 2-tailed p = .8083

Interpretation of Data:
Men: n = 71 Women: n = 52
Mean Rank = 63.58 Mean Rank = 59.85
U = 1734.0 W = 3112.0 Z = .6047 2-tailed p = .5454

Accessibility of Director:
Men: n = 70 Women: n = 52
Mean Rank = 58.92 Mean Rank = 64.97
U = 1639.5 W = 3378.5 Z = 1.0445 2-tailed p = .2963

Director Left/Took Sabbatical/Died:
Men: n = 41 Women: n = 25
Mean Rank = 32.30 Mean Rank = 35.46
U = 463.5 W = 886.5 Z = .7607 2-tailed p = .4469

Intransigent Committee Member(s):
Men: n = 54 Women: n = 33
Mean Rank = 43.79 Mean Rank= 44.35
U = 879.5 W = 1463.5 Z = .1107 2-tailed p = .9119

Obstructionist Committee Member(s):
Men: n = 55 Women: n = 33
Mean Rank = 45.58 Mean Rank = 42.70
U = 848.0 W = 1409.0 Z = .5752 2-tailed p = .5652

Writing the Chapters:
Men: n = 75 Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 61.87 Mean Rank = 65.89
U = 1790.5 W = 3360.5 Z = .6369 2-tailed p = .5242

Re-writing the Chapters:
Men: n = 72 Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 62.11 Mean Rank = 61.84
U = 1828.0 W = 3154.0 Z = .0434 2-tailed p = .9654

Timely Return of Drafts by Committee Members:
Men: n = 73 Women: n = 43
Mean Rank = 57.40 Mean Rank = 60.37
U = 1489.0 W = 2596.0 Z = .5378 2-tailed p = .5907

Someone Else Published the Research Idea:
Men: n = 38 Women: n = 21
Mean Rank = 29.05 Mean Rank = 31.71
U = 363.0 W = 666.0 Z = 1.1800 2-tailed p = .2380

Typing or Word Processing:
Men: n = 71 Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 63.68 Mean Rank = 58.46
U = 1655.5 W = 2981.5 Z = .8428 2-tailed p = .3994

Candidate's Own Perfectionism:
Men: n = 74 Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 58.41 Mean Rank = 69.66
U = 1547.5 W = 3552.5 Z = 1.7710 2-tailed p = .0766

Director's Perfectionism:
Men: n = 71 Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 65.46 Mean Rank = 55.99
U = 1529.5 W = 2855.5 Z = 1.5973 2-tailed p = .1102

Financial Problems:
Men: n = 66 Women: n = 43
Mean Rank = 54.21 Mean Rank = 56.21
U = 1367.0 W = 2417.0 Z = .3638 2-tailed p = .7160

Marital or Relationship Stress:
Men: n = 62 Women: n = 40
Mean Rank = 49.35 Mean Rank = 54.83
U = 1107.0 W = 2193.0 Z = .9921 2-tailed p = .3212

Poor Physical Health:

Men: n = 50			Women: n = 36
Mean Rank = 42.88			Mean Rank = 44.36
U = 869.0	W = 1597.0	Z = .3677	2-tailed p = .7131

Poor Mental Health/Depression/Lethargy:

Men: n = 60			Women: n = 41
Mean Rank = 49.03			Mean Rank = 53.88
U = 1112.0	W = 2209.0	Z = .8894	2-tailed p = .3738

Role Conflict:

Men: n = 54			Women: n = 40
Mean Rank = 43.51			Mean Rank = 52.89
U = 864.5	W = 2115.5	Z = 1.8679	2-tailed p = .0618

Job Related Pressures and Demands:

Men: n = 67			Women: n = 50
Mean Rank = 57.84			Mean Rank = 60.56
U = 1597.0	W = 3028.0	Z = .4446	2-tailed p = .6566

Setting Aside Time for the Dissertation:

Men: n = 73			Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 60.32			Mean Rank = 65.63
U = 1702.0	W = 3347.0	Z = .8425	2-tailed p = .3995

Other Barriers:

Men: n = 3			Women: n = 14
Mean Rank = 5.83			Mean Rank = 9.68
U = 11.5	W = 17.5	Z = 1.3160	2-tailed p = .1882

TABLE 24

FORMS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND PERCEPTION OF USEFULNESS:
COMPARISONS BASED ON TYPE OF DISSERTATION

MANN-WHITNEY U
WILCOXAN RANK SUM W TEST
(All scores have been corrected for ties)

Emotional Support Received From Dissertation Director:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 59			n = 62
Mean Rank = 55.84			Mean Rank = 65.91
U = 1524.5	W = 3294.5	Z = 1.6927	2-tailed p = .0905

Emotional Support Received From a Dissertation Support Group:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 28			n = 26
Mean Rank = 26.50			Mean Rank = 28.58
U = 336.0	W = 743.0	Z = .5085	2-tailed p = .6111

Emotional Support Received From Family and/or Spouses:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 56			n = 60
Mean Rank = 55.13			Mean Rank = 61.64
U = 1491.5	W = 3087.5	Z = 1.1743	2-tailed p = .2403

Emotional Support Received From Fellow Graduate Students:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 54			n = 57
Mean Rank = 56.12			Mean Rank = 55.89
U = 1532.5	W = 3030.5	Z = .0404	2-tailed p = .9678

Emotional Support Received From a Higher Power or Spiritual Source:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 41			n = 39
Mean Rank = 36.79			Mean Rank = 44.40
U = 647.5	W = 1731.5	Z = 1.5176	2-tailed p = .1291

Emotional Support Received From Professional Counseling:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 17			n = 29
Mean Rank = 21.74			Mean Rank = 24.53
U = 216.5	W = 369.5	Z = .7797	2-tailed p = .4356

Emotional Support Student Gave Himself or Herself:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 55			n = 60
Mean Rank = 56.77			Mean Rank = 59.13
U = 1582.5	W = 3122.5	Z = .4419	2-tailed p = .6585

Other Forms of Emotional Support:

Quantitative Researchers:			Qualitative Researchers:
n = 11			n = 8
Mean Rank = 8.64			Mean Rank = 11.88
U = 29.0	W = 95.0	Z = 1.5210	2-tailed p = .1283

TABLE 25

FORMS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND PERCEPTION OF USEFULNESS:
COMPARISONS BASED ON GENDER

MANN-WHITNEY U
WILCOXAN RANK SUM W TEST

(All scores have been corrected for ties)

Emotional Support Received from Dissertation Director:

Men: n = 76			Women: n = 54
Mean Rank = 64.44			Mean Rank = 66.99
U = 1971.5	W = 3617.5	Z = .4103	2-tailed p = .6816

Emotional Support Received From a Dissertation Support Group:

Men: n = 35			Women: n = 25
Mean Rank = 28.56			Mean Rank = 33.22
U = 369.5	W = 830.5	Z = 1.0702	2-tailed p = .2845

Emotional Support Received From Family and/or Spouses:

Men: n = 72			Women: n = 54
Mean Rank = 66.08			Mean Rank = 60.06
U = 1758.0	W = 3243.0	Z = 1.0345	2-tailed t = .3009

Emotional Support Received From Fellow Graduate Students:

Men: n = 70			Women: n = 51
Mean Rank = 60.70			Mean Rank = 61.41
U = 1764.0	W = 3132.0	Z = .1162	2-tailed p = .9075

Emotional Support Received From a Higher Power or Spiritual Source:

Men: n = 51			Women: n = 37
Mean Rank = 47.44			Mean Rank = 40.45
U = 793.5	W = 1496.5	Z = 1.3175	2-tailed p = .1877

Emotional Support Received From Professional Counseling:

Men: n = 28			Women: n = 24
Mean Rank = 23.63			Mean Rank = 29.85
U = 255.5	W = 716.5	Z = 1.7198	2-tailed p = .0855

Emotional Support Student Gave Himself or Herself:

Men: n = 71			Women: n = 52
Mean Rank = 64.30			Mean Rank = 58.86
U = 1682.5	W = 3060.5	Z = .9783	2-tailed p = .3279

Other Forms of Emotional Support:

Men: n = 8			Women: n = 13
Mean Rank = 9.50			Mean Rank = 11.92
U = 40.0	W = 76.0	Z = 1.0525	2-tailed p = .2926

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Please circle the degree you earned: PhD EdD
2. What year was your doctorate awarded? _____
3. In what year did you begin your doctoral studies? _____
4. In what year did you become ABD? _____
5. Was your dissertation a quantitative or a qualitative study? (Circle one)
6. In what year did you complete your baccalaureate degree? _____
7. If you earned a master's degree, in what year was it awarded? _____

FORMS OF SUPPORT:
Emotional and Financial

8. From the following list, RATE the amount of emotional support you received while writing your dissertation. Circle #1 for "little support" and #4 for "great support." If the item does not apply, circle "NA" for "Not applicable."

	Little Support			Great Support	
dissertation director/advisor	1	2	3	4	NA
dissertation support group	1	2	3	4	NA
family members	1	2	3	4	NA
fellow graduate students	1	2	3	4	NA
higher power/spiritual source	1	2	3	4	NA
professional counseling	1	2	3	4	NA
self	1	2	3	4	NA
OTHER: _____	1	2	3	4	

9. From the following list, RANK order the types of financial support you received while writing your dissertation. Rank only those items that applied to your situation. Use #1 to indicate your primary source of financial support, #2 the second source, #3 the third source, etc.

_____ Loans
_____ Graduate Teaching Assistantship/Fellowship
_____ Teaching Position other than an assistantship or fellowship
_____ Grant Money
_____ Employment other than teaching
_____ OTHER: Please specify _____

RELATED INFORMATION

10. When you began your dissertation, did you view it as a "springboard" to future research projects and publications? YES NO
11. Were you published before completing the dissertation? YES NO
12. Were you married while writing your dissertation? YES NO
13. Were you still married after completing the dissertation? YES NO
14. Did you live alone while writing your dissertation? YES NO
15. Did you create a physical space dedicated for working on your dissertation? YES NO
16. Are you male or female? MALE FEMALE

☆ **PLEASE TURN THIS PAGE OVER** ☆

THE SURVEY CONTINUES ON THE BACK

DISSERTATION OBSTACLES

17. From the following list, RATE the barriers or frustrations you encountered while completing your dissertation. Circle #1 if the item was a "minor barrier" and #4 to indicate a "major barrier."

	MINOR			MAJOR	
choosing a topic	1	2	3	4	NA
narrowing the topic; initially too broad	1	2	3	4	NA
faculty support for research idea	1	2	3	4	NA
review of the literature	1	2	3	4	NA
developing the methodology	1	2	3	4	NA
collection of data for analysis	1	2	3	4	NA
interpretation of data	1	2	3	4	NA
accessibility of dissertation director	1	2	3	4	NA
director leaves or takes sabbatical	1	2	3	4	NA
intransigent committee member(s)	1	2	3	4	NA
obstructionistic committee member(s)	1	2	3	4	NA
writing dissertation chapters	1	2	3	4	NA
re-writing dissertation chapters	1	2	3	4	NA
timely return of drafts from faculty	1	2	3	4	NA
someone else publishes the research	1	2	3	4	NA
typing/word processing the dissertation	1	2	3	4	NA
perfectionism (your own)	1	2	3	4	NA
perfectionism (dissertation director's)	1	2	3	4	NA
financial problems	1	2	3	4	NA
marital/relationship stress	1	2	3	4	NA
poor physical health	1	2	3	4	NA
poor mental health/depression/lethargy	1	2	3	4	NA
role conflict	1	2	3	4	NA
job related pressures/demands	1	2	3	4	NA
setting aside time for the dissertation	1	2	3	4	NA
OTHER: (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	NA

18. From the list in #17 above, indicate the three greatest barriers you encountered while writing your dissertation.

#1 Greatest Barrier _____

#2 Second Greatest Barrier _____

#3 Third Greatest Barrier _____

19. If you could offer one bit of advice to help future doctoral candidates complete their dissertations, what would that advice be?

_____

_____

_____

(THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION)

Dissertation Progress Time Table

DATE	Library	Organizing	Meetings	Support	Writing	Stats Analysis	Set Up Data Collection	Data Collection	Follow-up	Exercise	TOTAL HOURS